

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1317

March 13, 2020

The Honorable Robert Wilkie, Jr.
Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NE
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Wilkie:

As I travel across my district, reliable transportation to appointments is the most common concern raised by veterans, especially those in rural areas. Currently, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is operating the Highly Rural Transportation Grant (HRTG) under the Veterans Transportation Program (VTP) in 13 states. Illinois, however, is not one of those states. Therefore, many veterans in my district and other rural areas continue to face significant transportation barriers, such as limited transit options or long distances without the capability to drive, to attending in-person appointments.

On December 20, 2019, President Trump signed into law H.R. 1865 (*Pub.L. 116-94*), which provided funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The accompanying report directed the VA Office of Rural Health to use \$5,000,000 of its appropriated funding to establish a pilot program to provide transportation to veterans who live in rural areas.

I write to request information on how the VA plans to use the funds appropriated for this pilot. In particular, I request:

- How the VA will be designing the pilot program specifically for rural veterans, including an explanation of desired outcomes;
- What organizations the VA plans to partner with to carry out the pilot program, and how those organizations will be or were chosen;
- The number of locations where the VA plans to carry out the pilot program;
- The criteria for determining where the pilot program will be launched; and
- The timeline for launching and completing the pilot program.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this inquiry.

Kind Regards,


Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress